



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

COMMERCE BUILDING
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POLICY MEMORANDUM---WINDOWS

1. NEW CONSTRUCTION

All windows shall comply with the 2006 International Residential Code (IRC) for 1- and 2-family Dwellings or the 2006 International Building Code (IBC) for 3 or more units:

- 1) **Light:** The equivalent of 8% of the floor area in exterior glass
- 2) **Ventilation:** The minimum openable area to the outdoors shall be 4 percent of the floor area being ventilated.
- 3) **Emergency escape and rescue openings (Egress Windows):** All bedrooms, sleeping rooms (or potential sleeping rooms) below the fourth story and habitable basements, must have an exterior door or an escape/rescue window as part of the above requirements. The door or window must have the sill or threshold within 44 inches of the floor and an openable area of 5.7 square feet (821 square inches) using an opening width no less than 20 inches and an opening height no less than 24 inches. (NOTE: These 2 minimums do not equal 5.7 sq. ft. If the width of the opening is only 20 inches, then the height must be over 41 inches. If the height of the opening is only 24 inches, then the width would be slightly over 34 inches wide.)

Exception for Grade Floor Openings: If the bottom window sill will be within 44" of grade (either above or below grade), then the openable area may be reduced to 5 square feet, with the same minimum height and width as noted above.

NOTE: The **OPENABLE AREA** of an escape window (or "door") is the opening created by the standard method of operation of the unit, thus a double-hung window will only be considered an approved escape window if the openable area is achieved by raising the lower sash vertically in the normal manner. So-called easily removable sashes will not be approved except in very, very unusual existing conditions related primarily to historic masonry structures. Any such approval requires "**SPECIAL PRE-APPROVAL**" as outlined on the back page.

- 4) **New Basements:** All new 1- and 2-family dwelling basements must also have an escape/rescue window whether finished or not. See additional handout for the requirements of area wells.
- 5) **Additions with Basements:** Additions to 1- and 2-family dwellings that include new basement areas are required to provide an escape window or door within the scope of the work. The escape window or door may be provided in the new addition basement or the existing basement at the owner's option. If a basement has two approved exits, an additional escape window or door will not be required. One of the exits may be through a garage if the exit from the garage to the exterior is a hinged swinging door.

2. EXISTING CONSTRUCTION

A. FULL WINDOW REPLACEMENT: If the entire window is removed the following will apply:

- 1) **Non-Bedroom Windows:** A window may be replaced in the existing opening if it is the same size and no re-framing is required. If the window opening is re-framed or the window(s) is smaller than the original, then the requirements of Item 1.A.1 & 1.2 above must be met.
- 2) **Bedroom Windows:** If a bedroom does not have an exterior door or at least one window will not meet Item 1.3 above, the window(s) may nevertheless be replaced with the same size window unit(s) in the existing opening, with no re-framing, **EXCEPT** that the following conditions require "**SPECIAL PRE-APPROVAL**":
 - a) If a bedroom only has "Awning" or "Hopper" style windows and they are proposed

(See Reverse)

to be replaced in kind.

b) Other windows that is grossly undersized (less than 5.0 square feet [468 square inches] of openable area.)

B. SASH REPLACEMENTS: The individual sash/es of an existing window may be replaced without regard to light, ventilation, or escape/rescue requirements. **THE WINDOW FRAME MUST REMAIN AND ONLY THE SASHES ARE REMOVED AND REPLACED.** Window track inserts that do not reduce the openable width more than 1 (one) inch on either side (2" total) are to be considered in this category. Any overall width reduction of more than 1 inch will be governed by the requirements in Item C below.

C. WINDOW INSERTS OR "POCKET" WINDOWS: Window insert units, "pocket" windows, or window track inserts that slip into the existing window frame, within normal tolerances, and without substantially reducing light and ventilation, may be installed in all windows except in bedrooms or sleeping rooms. In bedrooms and sleeping rooms, without an exterior door, at least one window must either meet the escape/rescue requirements of the Building Code or be maintained at the largest existing size as noted above in 2.A.2; with the following **EXCEPTION:** Insert units or pocket windows that do not reduce the opening by more than 1" (one) on any side (2" total width or height reduction) will be allowed as an incidental change that does not significantly affect the size of the window opening.

"SPECIAL PRE-APPROVAL" means the applicant shall submit a formal letter of request, to the Building Official (via Plan Review) , explaining the difficulties involved with conforming to the Building Code and/or this interpretation and requesting approval of a specific design. The request must include the existing and proposed conditions-window sizes, openable sizes and areas, sill height above floor, and all unusual or difficult conditions that preclude compliance. Please plan ahead, this must be submitted before a permit is issued and before any construction begins AND WINDOWS SHOULD NOT BE ORDERED OR PURCHASED BEFORE APPROVAL; see also **"HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE"** below.

NOTE: A **General Building Permit** is required for all such work that exceeds \$500.00 in VALUE. (VALUE is the legitimate cost of both MATERIAL and LABOR, whether purchased, donated, bartered, etc.). Except for historic properties locally designated under chapters 73 and 74. See "Historic Preservation Ordinance" below if applicable.

SAFETY GLAZING is required when the window glass is within 60 inches of the walking surface and within 2 feet of a door, or within a tub or shower enclosure, or enclosing stairway landings or within 5 feet of the top or bottom of stairways. (2006 International Residential Code) Section R308.4.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE: Saint Paul has several locally designated historic districts and individual sites. All exterior repairs and changes require prior approval from Heritage Preservation Commission staff or the full Heritage Preservation Commission. The design review guidelines for historic buildings require that older and significant windows be repaired and preserved. There are repair techniques that should be explored first before considering sash replacements or full replacements. When window replacement of historic windows is proposed, staff will consider the historical and architectural detailing and significance of the older window, the level of deterioration, and how closely the new proposed window matches the historic window. **NOTE:** Do not order or purchase windows before obtaining approval; proposals can be and are denied if they do not comply with the design review guidelines. (Telephone: 651.266.9078)